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TESTIMONY

OF

THE UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY

Re:

RAISED BILL NO. 5328 – AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY CUSTOMER  
COMPLAINTS

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING

HARTFORD, CT

FEBRUARY 26, 2008

Good morning, Senator Fonfara, Representative Fontana, Senator Herlihy, Representative Williams and members of the Energy and Technology Committee. I am James P. Torgerson, Chief Executive Officer of The United Illuminating Company. I am testifying today concerning Raised Bill No. 5328 – AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLAINTS.

UI supports the shared goal of providing an effective forum for the timely and satisfactory resolution of customer complaints that have not been fully resolved at the utility level. However, substituting the Office of Consumer Counsel for the Department of Public Utility Control as the designated decision maker is not the answer.

Pursuant to Section 16-2a of the Connecticut General Statutes, the OCC's statutory role is "to act as an advocate for consumer interests in all matters which may affect Connecticut consumers" in utility matters. The OCC performs that role well, by advocating for consumer interests in DPUC proceedings and otherwise, but the role is incompatible with that of decision maker for customer disputes.

It is basic to the checks and balances necessary for a fair and balanced resolution of any dispute – from a court case to a customer complaint – that the judge or other decision maker cannot also be an advocate for one of the participants.

UI believes that the OCC can, and perhaps should, play an expanded role in customer disputes before the DPUC. The OCC is familiar with the statutes and regulations applicable to a dispute, and may be able to help the customer better express his or her position during the complaint resolution process. But it would be inappropriate to have that body, whose express

function is to advocate on behalf of customers, also decide the ultimate outcome of customer disputes. That responsibility must be held by an independent entity such as the DPUC.